Reading to Play, Playing to Read is a community-engaged project that combines the learning goals of two Spanish courses: MLSP 302W-CE Composition and Conversation II taught by Dr. Lucía Osa-Melero and MLSP 280 Spanish for Health Professionals taught by Carmen Alicia Martínez. Students from both courses collaborate to develop a 4-week program on health awareness and illness prevention culture for 5-8-year-old Hispanic children, who recently immigrated to the US. Hispanic children attend Beechwood Elementary school in the Beechview neighborhood.

In 2016, Reading to Play, Playing to Read was recognized nationwide by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as a Globally Engaged Program. It is truly an honor that attests to the breadth and depth, the impact, and the curricular integration of Dr. Osa-Melero's and Professor Martínez's exemplary educational venture as well as the quality of the community partner relationship.

Although community engagement as a pedagogical tool in the second language (L2) classrooms has been an active subject of inquiry in the language acquisition field for the last twenty years, important questions about its effectiveness in L2 learning remain unanswered. Most research efforts, such as Bloom’s (2008) and Lear and Abott’s (2009) studies, have focused on community-engagement as a tool to enhance cultural awareness and cultural competency, overlooking other relevant language objectives. Additionally, as Abbott and Lear (2010) state, most studies on community engagement and L2 acquisition tend to be supported by isolated anecdotes or small number of participants rather than consistent and concrete data.

The present study plans to investigate vocabulary learning on a significant number of participants with the hope of obtaining generalizable results. To this end, we will use data collected during a pilot study on vocabulary learning that was conducted in 2017 and 2018 with two other colleagues, Dr. Nausica Marcos Miguel from Denison University and Mari Félix Cubas Mora from Slippery Rock University. Mari Félix worked as an adjunct professor in our department during Spring 2012. Both teach Spanish at the college level and are active researchers in the field of L2 vocabulary learning. We are positive that this collaboration not only strengthens the research rigor in our study, but also helps us, as new researchers in the field of L2 vocabulary learning, disseminate the results through national and international conferences. In addition, we will use brief oral interviews to focus on community members’ perceptions of the program, especially on how the program affects parents’ plans on their children future education.

Quantitative results from the vocabulary pilot study during year 2016 and 2017 showed evidence of substantial learning. Despite the fact that reflective essays were collected in all past editions, we have now incorporated a list of targeted questions that elicit focused
responses with more information. The experience we gained as researchers during years 2017 and 2018 conducting the pilot studies assisted us to improve the data collection process. Although we have made many significant modifications to the initial idea of the research process, the two pilot editions have been vital to designing a more focused and better adjusted research plan for 2019.

The mixed methods research study will examine Duquesne students’ vocabulary learning in Spanish during their participation in the program, and children and families’ perceptions of the program.

Data will be collected to answer the following research questions

a. College students’ L2 vocabulary learning:  
   (a1) Does RPPR enhance school-related vocabulary acquisition?

b. Community members’ perceptions on RPPR:  
   (b1) What are children’s perceptions of the program?  
   (b2) What are parents' perceptions of the program?  
   (b3) To what extent does the program affect future plans for their children?